

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2399
ANSWERED ON:15.12.2008
TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBERS BASE IN RURAL AREAS
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether despite an increase in the number of mobile phone subscribers and density of telephones, the number of telephone subscribers is very low in rural areas of the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to improve the telecom services in the country, particularly in rural areas?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI A. RAJA)

(a) & (b) As on 31.10.2008, 109.05 million telephones have been provided in the rural areas out of 363.95 million total telephones provided in the country. The rural tele-density stands at 13.40 per cent as on 31.10.2008 against the target of 4 per cent by 2010, as per National Telecom Policy (NTP) 1999.

(c) The following steps are taken/ being taken by the Government to improve the telecom services in the country, particularly in rural areas:

(i) Support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for provisioning of Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) in all the 1685 net cost positive Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs).

(ii) A scheme has been launched by USO Fund to provide subsidy support for setting up and managing 7871 number of infrastructure sites (towers) in 500 districts spread over 27 states, for provision of mobile services in the specified rural and remote areas, where there is no existing fixed wireless or mobile coverage in the country. Also, about 11000 number of additional infrastructure sites (towers) are proposed to be installed in the second phase.

(iii) Relaxation of norms by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) for laying cable upto 5 Kms of exchanges against the earlier standard of 2.5 Kms based on demand and techno-commercial consideration.

(iv) Large-scale deployment of Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) network by BSNL in rural areas.

(v) Deployment of Mobile Network along all the Highways by BSNL to give incidental coverage to large parts of rural areas.

(vi) Remote and far-flung areas, which are not possible to be covered with terrestrial technology, are planned by BSNL to be covered with Digital Satellite Phone Terminals (DSPTs).

(vii) Expansion of Cellular Mobile Network by BSNL to overcome the network congestion caused due to ever growing demand and traffic.

(viii) Improvement of the outdoor network by BSNL by creating pole less network, replacement of under ground paper core cables etc. in phased manner to reduce the fault rate.

(ix) In addition to the efforts made by BSNL, the private operators are also offering their services to meet the demand for telephone.